Caitlyn Hackmann 9/16/13   
**Learning Soccer**

Something that I know very well is the game of soccer. I first started playing soccer when I was five years old. I solely played on a recreational team up until I was nine years old, at this age I also started to play club soccer. Club soccer is different than recreational soccer in many ways but the main differences are that it is much more competitive and also played throughout the whole state rather than just in your hometown. I continued playing soccer on many different leagues until I was 18 years old.  
 Soccer was not something that was easy for me to learn right away. It took many, many years of constant practice. I remember my parents set a soccer net up in the backyard and I would always spend hours out there after school practicing shooting the ball. It took a lot of dedication to master the sport. But, it was also not just practicing with a soccer ball that allowed me to learn this game so well. I had to workout almost every day. This included running, stretching, sit-ups, push-ups, sprints, and going to the gym. I always had to make sure that each day I was doing some form of activity that helped me get into better shape. By getting into better shape I was able to stay in the games for the full time and I always had enough energy to perform to the best of my ability.  
 Yet, soccer is also a very mental sport. You can be in the best shape of your life and have the skills but still not have the knowledge. My older brother, Chris, also played soccer. I was his biggest fan growing up. I would go to every single game and bring a notebook and write observations about the game down. I also loved to watch professional soccer on television with my dad. I feel that by watching so much soccer, I was able to see the game as more of a whole rather than just in pieces while playing. I was able to see how spaced out the field could actually be. I was able to see where I should be on the field by watching the player that was playing my position. It gave me a much better understanding of the game and also opened my eyes to what I had to work on more.  
 Soccer is not just talent. It is work. It took me many years to fully understand the sport of soccer and how it is played. It took a lot of practice as well. But, after 13 years of mastering and learning this sport, I ended up being offered scholarships to play at colleges including the University of Rhode Island. All of that hard work finally led to me playing at the best of my ability. Unfortunately, I ended up deciding playing soccer in college was not for me. Yet, I am thankful that all the hard work and practice led me to master the game of soccer.